# Activity 1: A Tale of Two Neighborhoods: The Lower East Side and Harlem

<http://docsteach.org/activities/5705>

Author: Christopher Zarr, National Archives at New York Cit

**Tool:** [Focusing on Details: Compare and Contrast](http://docsteach.org/tools/focusing-on-details)

**Historical Era:** The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

**Primary Historical Thinking Skill:** Historical Analysis & Interpretation

1. Looking at each photograph individually, list the people, objects, and activities in each photograph.

2. Looking at each photograph individually, write down descriptive words or phrases that come to mind when you look at it.

3. Based on the photographs, what are some of the similarities and differences between the Lower East Side and Harlem in the early 20th century?

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**Purposeful - The purpose is to introduce students to** the concept that various communities may be alike or different and why that may be. The two communities used in the activity are two of New York City’s most important ethnic neighborhoods.

In-depth Understanding - This activity only give superficial information and no real facts so it does not appear to provide for in-depth understanding, nor does it seem to provide a bridge to students’ own experiences and how they may be related.

Prior Knowledge - The teacher provides each student with the photo analysis worksheet as a tool in directing their attention and recording their observations but there is no discussion f prior knowledge, either regarding how communities can be different or about how to use the worksheet.

Scaffolding - It does not appear that there is any modeling or guided practice for the students, other than a general discussion. Since this is a grade 2 – 8 activity it would seem logical for the teacher to provide scaffolding, at least for the lower grades. It should also be briefly modeled as a refresher of the higher grades.

Disciplined Inquiry – The worksheet provides focused areas for observation and asks the students to compare and contrast. It also asks what they may infer from the photograph and what questions may raise but the activity does not provide for further ‘investigation’/ research. The activity does support the students closely observing the details of the photos (i.e., signs in different languages, facial expressions of individuals in the photograph, etc.) which may provide them to make inferences.

Assessment – The activity does not seem to provide for either formative or summative assessment, unless the teacher uses the discussions as a basis for formative assessment.

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# Activity 2: Americanism

<http://docsteach.org/activities/14950>

Author: Matt Loughlin

Tool: [Weighing the Evidence](http://docsteach.org/tools/weighing-the-evidence)

Historical Era: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Primary Historical Thinking Skill: Historical Analysis & Interpretation

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**Purposeful -** The activity purpose is to view the limited evidence (photographs/documents) and decide whether westward expansion or consumerism shaped America. A better question would be what does it mean to be an American today versus in the 1800’s.

In-depth Understanding – Don’t believe this activity will provide in-depth understanding of what it means to be an American. There are only two choices and they are in the distant past. The activity may cause students to think that only those factors shaped America. This activity is superficial and should be in a broader unit, but how to incorporate it is not included in the description.

Prior Knowledge – The activity does not seem to be relevant to the students or build on their knowledge.

Scaffolding – The activity intent is for students to take sides in debates and analyzing multiple and conflicting sources. It appears that the students are expected to form an opinion and speak on it based on the seven sources. It does not appear to have any instruction or modeling by the teacher, while showing how it fits in a historical context, will lead to an increased comprehension.

Disciplined Inquiry – The activity does not appear to encourage disciplined inquiry since it asks for students to voice their opinion based on very limited information. There should be more guided questioning/research to get a fuller picture of what shaped American as well as putting it into today’s context.

Assessment – There is no real assessment. When the activity is completed (students move the photographs/documents to the scale and send it to teacher, there are some notations regarding which photograph/document provided the strongest support for each side of the debate.